

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO FACULTY OF MUSIC
2000-2001 Season

CD 2000 -- 115

World of Music Series

PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

Robin Engelman, director

Tuesday, December 5, 2000
8 p.m.
Walter Hall



Where Great Music Meets Great Minds

World of Music Series

Presents

PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

Robin Engelman, director

PROGRAMME

Ancient Military Aires:

Three Camps - 17th C. Ah! Ca Ira - 18th C. Hell on the Wabash - 19th C.
The Ensemble

Terry Hulick

Rondino (1957)

*Tim Francom, Dean Pomeroy, Ian Gibson,
Jyri Kurri*

Henk de Vlieger

Drie Inventions (1977)

Peter Jones, Christa Mercey, Charlene Jack

John Cage

Trio (1936)

Allegro

March

Waltz

*Christa Mercey, Michael Gambacurta,
Charlene Jack*

John Cage

Forever and Sunsmell (1944)

Ainsley McNeaney, vocal solo

Christa Mercey and Charlene Jack, percussion

Daniel Levitan

Variations on a Ghanian Theme (1981)

Ian Gibson, Jyri Kurri, Dean Pomeroy

John Cage

First Construction in Metal (1939)

*Tim Francom, piano - Christa Mercey, assistant
Michael Gambacurta, Dean Pomeroy,
Ainsley McNeaney, Danny Tones, Brian Lahaie*

Meet the Artist

ROBIN ENGELMAN is Adjunct Professor of music at the University of Toronto. He studied percussion and composition with Warren Benson at Ithaca College, Ithaca, New York, and his compositions include, "Bridge" (1981), "Remembrance" (1988), and "Lullaby for Esme" (1997). His composition for choir and percussion, "Left to live on...", was commissioned by Toronto's Amadeus Choir, written in collaboration with its director Lydia Adams, and premiered in Toronto by NEXUS and the Amadeus Choir in June of 1999. He has taught percussion at

Ithaca College, York University (Toronto) and the University of Toronto. He was principle percussionist with three symphony orchestras in the United States before serving in that capacity under Seiji Ozawa and Karel Ancerl with the Toronto Symphony. For a number of years he was principle percussionist with the Canadian Opera Orchestra. He conducts contemporary music concerts and recordings in Toronto, and is the conductor and director of the Percussion Ensemble of the University of Toronto.

Programme Notes

The three drum beatings that begin tonight's program, are considered essential repertoire in the so-called ancient style of rudimental drumming, a form of drumming closely associated with military music prior to 1865. They were all written to accompany fife melodies. The first, *Three Camps*, was played only to wake the troops and its date of origin is unknown, but it can be found in print as long ago as 1650. The tune *Ah! Ca Ira* (it'll be alright), dates from the French Revolution but the drum beating, as with that *Hell on the Wabash*, is by Drum Major George Bruce who was active in the middle 1800's. Bruce collaborated with fifer, composer Dan Emmett on the famous *Drummer's and Fifer's guide* of 1862. (Dan Emmett was the composer of *Dixie*). Eighteenth century military tempos were quite slow as a soldiers accoutrements could easily weigh over one hundred pounds and roads were, by today's standards, very poor.

Percussion ensembles began to appear in North American schools during the early 1950's. One of the first was at Ithaca College in Ithaca, New York, where Terry Hulick studied with composer/percussionist Warren Benson. *Rondino* was written for the most commonly available percussion instruments of the time - tambourine,

tom-toms, bass drum, snare drum, wood blocks, cymbals, etc.- instruments traditionally used in bands and orchestras. *Rondino* is one of the most intelligently constructed, charming and musically demanding works from the infancy of percussion ensembles.

The next three pieces are trios. Henk de Vlieger is principal percussionist with the Netherlands Radio Orchestra and a prolific arranger with a modest number of compositions. (He has arranged Mussorgski's *Pictures at an Exhibition* for percussion orchestra and made three symphonic compilations of operas by Richard Wagner for the Dutch conductor Edo de Waart). His trios' forms and instrumentations are very simple - 1. Bells, 2. Wood blocks, 3. Drums - but very difficult to play.

The instrumentation of the Cage Trio was influenced by Cage's financial poverty. He was living in Santa Monica, California and selling piano lessons door to door to housewives. He could not afford to buy or rent percussion instruments, so he collected things in his neighborhood that could be used for his music and built or borrowed instruments. Whereas some of his later

works for percussion are quite complex - for instance the last piece on our program - these trios are short, sweet and simple. Cage used the gently humorous *Waltz in Amores* (1943).

The trio for voice and two percussionists was written for a dance by Jean Erdman and is a setting of a 1940 poem by e.e. cummings. There is only one other work by Cage for dancers and that is *Credo in US* (1943) for Merce Cunningham and Jean Erdman. Forever and Sunsmell is a wonderful example of Cage's imaginative use of percussion and his ability to evoke a wide range of emotions with simple resources.

Forever and sunsmell

wherelings whenlings
(daughters of if but offspring of hope fear
sons of unless and children of almost)
never shall guess the dimension of

him whose
each
foot likes the
here of this earth
whose both
eyes
love
this now of the sky

-endlings of isn't
shall never
begin
to begin to

imagine how (only are shall be were
dawn dark rain snow rain-bow &
a

moon
's whis-
per
in sunset

or thrushes toward dusk among
whipporwills or

tree field rock hollyhock forest brook
chickadee
mountain. Mountain)
whycoloured worlds of because do

not stand against yes which is built by
forever & sunsmell
(sometimes a wonder
of wild roses

sometimes)
with north
over
the barn

e.e. cummings, Poems 1923-1954

Variations on a Ghanaian Theme is based on rhythmic patterns found in the dance music of some drum ensembles in Ghana.

The *First Construction in Metal* is indeed a construction and the use of that word relates to Cage's definition of music being the "organization of sound". It was at this time (1939) that Cage began to think about the role of the composer in the compositional process: a line of reasoning that would eventually lead to his I-Ching coin tossing and mapping of star charts as techniques for diminishing his role in the creative process.

Cage said in A Composer's Confessions, (his aesthetic attitude) has nothing to do with the desire for self expression, but simply had to do with the organization of materials. I recognized that expression of two kinds, that arising from the personality of the composer and that arising from the nature and context of the materials, was inevitable, but I felt its emanation was stronger and more sensible when not consciously striven for, but simply allowed to arise naturally". This first of three constructions is based on the number 16. The phrase lengths (in bars) are grouped 4, 3, 2, 3, 4 and the larger sections of the work are grouped in the same order.

Programme notes by Robin Engelman

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